



Adventist  
Health Ministries  
GENERAL CONFERENCE



Seventh-day  
Adventist Church

# LET'S CELEBRATE **TEMPERANCE**

**T** is for temperance—the balance in life.



**CELEBRATIONS**  
LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

"He was my only son, but I had started wishing that he would die.... And now, I cry the whole night with his photograph in my hand," says 55-year-old Lakshmi Devi. Her son, Sushil, died of a drug overdose. He was 25. She says Sushil started using drugs when he was still in school, and eventually, he dropped out. In the early days, he was addicted to cough syrups and injections, but he gradually turned to heroin, locally known as chitta.

"Our jewelry and household goods started vanishing. He would take away and sell whatever items he could lay his hands on to buy drugs," she says. "I wanted him to lead a normal life, have a family.... I felt so helpless, so broken whenever he became unconscious after taking drugs. He would forget where he was and what he was doing. In those moments, I would just wish and pray that he would die."

At one point, she recalls, he wanted to quit and even asked her for help. But she did not know that a rehab center was an option. "I just took him to a regular hospital, where he died after three days," she says. "But now I regret my words."

His was one of 60 deaths linked to drug abuse in Punjab between January and June 2018, according to official estimates. In comparison, 30 people died in drug-related incidents in all of 2017.



# The Meaning of "Temperance"

Temperance means different things to different people. For some, it relates to childhood and youth instruction on the importance of abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs. In many cultures and communities, "temperance" has become a forgotten word — a term from the past. So does it still apply to our lives today?

Webster's Dictionary defines temperance as "moderation in action, thought, or feeling, or moderation or abstinence from intoxicating drink." This definition includes aspects of behavior and attitude and specifies the avoidance of alcoholic beverages. Is this comprehensive enough? To achieve true balance, we need to address all aspects of life. A definition that may move us closer to this wholeness is: "True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful."<sup>1</sup> This description implies a way of life as opposed to a checklist of certain substances and behaviors, suggesting that in excess, even good things may be harmful!

What makes matters more complex is that many regard certain destructive habits and lifestyle choices as desirable and even beneficial. Tobacco and alcohol are legal and available with very few restrictions. As a result, they've become entwined in cultures and societies worldwide, despite the fact that they are the leading and third leading causes, respectively, of preventable death! The seduction of advertising as well as the stranglehold of commerce have much to do with this tragic situation, but in reality, our personal choices play an important role. One component of being able to make wise choices is the accessibility of information, so let's look at some of the information available.









## RISKS OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION

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Alcohol is a known addictive substance. The likelihood of becoming an alcoholic (euphemistically termed “problem drinker”) depends on numerous factors. The chance of alcoholism developing over a lifetime is 13% (13 of every 100 persons who drink alcohol). If one has a first-degree relative (father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandparent) who suffered from alcohol dependence, this percentage doubles.

If experimentation with alcohol begins before the age of 14, the chance of dependence increases to over 40%!<sup>4</sup> This demonstrates the importance of alcohol education from an early age and the fostering of relationships and connectedness with youth. An additional and vital layer of protection for both young and old is a connection to a set of values, such as the principles of the Bible and walking with the risen Savior.

## ALCOHOL AND SOCIETY

It is well known that alcohol use is associated (often causally) with accidents of all kinds, such as road fatalities, but it is also involved in domestic violence, murder, rape and other criminal activities. In 2010, David Nutt and his coresearchers published an analysis in the prestigious Lancet medical journal revealing that in the United Kingdom, alcohol is more harmful than heroin and crack cocaine. This is because the researchers focused on the effect the drugs/toxins had not only on the user but on others as well (family, community and society)..7



*Preserve your 1*





Life!

# ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND GLOBAL HEALTH

Alcohol consumption varies widely between countries, depending on cultural traditions. There is also a discrepancy between developed and emerging economies. Alcohol, like tobacco, is being exported to developing countries, adding huge burdens to already inadequate health-care systems. According to the “Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health” released by the World Health Organization in Geneva in February 2011:<sup>2</sup>

- Approximately 2.5 million people die from alcohol-related causes each year.
- Four percent of all deaths are related to alcohol, including injuries, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and liver cirrhosis.
- Globally, 6.2% of male deaths and 1.1% of female deaths are related to alcohol.

The risk to one’s health increases even more when binge drinking occurs — in other words, when people drink to get drunk. Binge drinking is defined differently in various regions of the world: in the United States, more than five consecutive drinks for a male and more than four for a female constitutes binge drinking; in Australia, it’s more than four drinks per night. Binge drinking is increasing in many parts of the world, mainly among youth, but all age groups are affected.<sup>3</sup>





# KILLER TOBACCO

There is another lethal and freely available poison that is marketed in various forms — tobacco. It's smoked, chewed, inhaled and passed through water; all forms, however, are harmful and place the user at significant risk of disease and even death.

- Tobacco kills nearly 6 million people each year. Of this number, more than 5 million are users and ex-users, and more than 600,000 are nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke. Without urgent intervention, the annual death toll could rise to some 8 million by 2030.
- Nearly 80% of the world's 1 billion smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.
- Up to half of current users will eventually die of a tobacco-related disease.

Secondhand smoke (SHS) is, by definition, the smoke that fills restaurants, offices, homes, and any enclosed space in which tobacco products are burned, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, bidis, and water pipes (shisha). There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. It's a proven cause of cardiovascular and respiratory disease in adults, including lung cancer and coronary heart disease. SHS is also associated with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and causes low birth weight. Children exposed to SHS have an increased incidence of upper and lower respiratory infections.

In summary, both alcohol and tobacco are extremely dangerous substances. Scientific evidence and public health statistics reveal them to be leading killers in the world today. This is where temperance provides a wise safeguard: avoid all things harmful! The facts surely speak for themselves.







# TRUE BALANCE IN LIVING

Sushil's story reveals the consequences of failing to avoid all things harmful. As we take stock of our own lives, there may be areas in which we lack balance, such as sleeping too little, working too hard, not exercising enough (or maybe overdoing it), eating too much, and the list goes on. Even the most strong-willed among us is unable to achieve true balance in all things without strong reliance on the power of God, who not only made us but is also able to sustain us and strengthen our will and ability to make wise choices.

Remember spiritual counsel: "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV). Realizing that this is a very tall order, God is on our side: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

It's encouraging to remember that help is never far away. Our gracious heavenly Father stands ready to guide our choices, ensuring a sustained and successful balance in life. This calls for celebration!



1 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), 562.2 World Health Organization, *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2011), accessed April 4, 2012, [https://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/alcohol\\_2011/en/](https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/alcohol_2011/en/).3 Ibid.4 Richard K. Ries et al., eds., *Principles of Addiction Medicine*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2009).5 European Alcohol Policy Alliance, "Alcohol and Cancer — The Forgotten Link," *Eurocare*, May 2011, accessed April 5, 2012, [www.eurocare.org/library/latest\\_news/alcohol\\_and\\_cancer\\_the\\_forgotten\\_link](http://www.eurocare.org/library/latest_news/alcohol_and_cancer_the_forgotten_link).6 World Cancer Research Fund International, accessed April 5, 2012, [www.wcrf.org](http://www.wcrf.org).7 David Nutt, Leslie A. King, and Lawrence D. Philips, "Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis," *The Lancet* 376, no. 9752 (2010), 1558-65.8 Thomas Babor et al. *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1393.9 "Tobacco," World Health Organization, July 2011, accessed April 5, 2012, [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs339/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs339/en/index.html). See also Omar Sharey et al., *The Tobacco Atlas*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2009).



## CELEBRATIONS

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